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A

DISCOURSE

Occaſioned by the Death of

Mrs. ELIZABETH HOWARD,

Who departed this Life

On Lord's Day Morning, April 13, 1777,

Aged 43.

Delivered the Lord's Day after her Deceaſe.

By her bereaved Conſort,

SIMEON HOWARD, A. M.

Paſtor of the Weſt Church in Boston.

Her Children ariſe up and call her bleſſed; her Huſband alſo, and he praiſeth her. King Solomon.

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To the Society uſually worſhipping at the Weſt Meeting Houſe in BOSTON,

THE following Diſcourſe, publiſhed at their requeſt, is reſpectfully inſcribed, in grateful acknowledgment of their regard to the memory of Mrs. HOWARD, and of their generoſity and friendſhip to

The AUTHOR.



A Funeral Diſcourſe.

2 TIM. I. 10.

—"Who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the goſpel."

THE natural evils to which mankind is ſubject, in the preſent ſtate, are dreaded, not only for the painful ſenſations which they give, but becauſe they are conſidered as having a tendency to put a period to human life;—an event which we naturally fear, and wiſh to keep off. The profeſſors of chriſtianity, when St. Paul wrote this epiſtle, were greatly expoſed to ſuch evils from the malice of their enemies. He himſelf had a large ſhare of them; and was then in bonds on account of the goſpel. And he ſeems to have been afraid that the conſideration of theſe things would diſcourage Timothy from a faithful diſcharge of his miniſterial duty. He, therefore, exhorts him to be firm, and reſolute, and patient, whatever

ever ſufferings he might be expoſed to, in the proſecution of this good work. This exhortation he enforces by a variety of conſiderations, in this and the following chapters; among which, thoſe ſuggeſted in the text are of great weight: Where, after having mentioned the kindneſs and grace of God, in calling the Gentiles to the profeſſion and enjoyment of chriſtianity, and obſerving that, though God had determined from the beginning, to grant them this favor, yet his gracious purpoſe had, in a great meaſure, been kept hid from former ages, "but is now made manifeſt, by the appearing of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt;" he reminds him of two important bleſſings for which mankind are indebted to this appearing, or the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, viz. the deſtruction of death, and the diſcovery of eternal life—"Who hath aboliſhed "death, and brought life and immortality to "light, through the goſpel:" As if he had ſaid, you have no reaſon to relinquiſh your duty, through fear of any thing which wicked and cruel men can do to you; for let them do their worſt, death is the utmoſt effect of their power; and this ought not to affright you, becauſe Chriſt hath aboliſhed death, and diſcovered by his goſpel a ſtate of future and eternal glory.

But without paying any further regard to the connection of the words; I propoſe, in diſcourſing from them,

I. To

I. To conſider what the Apoſtle here intends by death.

II. To ſhew in what ſenſe, and by what means Chriſt hath aboliſhed death.

III. To illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition in the latter clauſe, viz. that Chriſt hath brought life and immortality to light, through the goſpel.

AFTER I have briefly conſidered theſe particulars, the ſubject will be cloſed with ſome reflections by way of application.

I. I am to enquire what is meant, in the text, by death.

Now this term generally ſignifies, both in common language and in the ſacred ſcriptures, that event which puts a period to this preſent animal life, the ſeperation of the ſoul and body; in conſequence of which, the body becomes incapable of all action, enjoyment and ſuffering, and returns to the duſt from whence it was taken. There can be no doubt but this death is intended by the Apoſtle.

BUT this word in holy writ, eſpecially in the New Teſtament, frequently means that eternal puniſhment which the wicked are to ſuffer in a future ſtate. In this ſenſe it is uſed by our bleſſed Saviour, when he ſays, "Verily, "verily, I ſay unto you, if a man keep my "ſayings,

" ſayings, he ſhall never ſee death :" And by the Apoſtle Paul, when he tells us, " to be " carnally minded is death :" And by the Apoſtle John, when he ſays, " he that loveth " not his brother abideth in death." This is ſometimes called the ſecond death. Thus we read in the Revelations, " he that evercometh, " ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond death ;" whereas " the fearful and unbelieving, &c. " ſhall have their part in the lake which burn- " eth with fire and brimſtone ; which is the " ſecond death." There can, I think, be no doubt, but that the Apoſtle uſes the term death, in the paſſage under conſideration, to include this future and eternal puniſhment, as well as the diſſolution of the body : For death in the former part of the text, is evidently oppoſed to life and immortality in the latter part ; but " immortality, eternal life, everlaſting life," and the like expreſſions in ſcripture, always mean, not merely an endleſs exiſtence, but an happy one, exempted from all puniſhment and ſuffering. By death therefore in the text we are to underſtand both temporal and eternal death.

II. I am next to ſhew in what ſenſe, and by what means Chriſt hath aboliſhed death, both temporal and eternal.

You are ſenſible that He hath not ſo aboliſhed temporal death, as to exempt any of the human race from dying. In conſequence of the tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parents, it is appointed

appointed unto all men once to die; and the duſt muſt return to the earth from whence it was taken. The wiſe and the good, as well as the fool and the brutiſh perſon, muſt in this ſenſe, periſh. As death reigned from Adam to Moſes, and from Moſes to this time, ſo he will continue to reign to the end of the world, and perſons of all characters muſt bow to his dreary ſceptre. How then hath Chriſt aboliſhed this death? I anſwer by reſcuing the body from his dominion, and reſtoring it to life again: For as in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive. At an appointed time, all who are in their graves, all who ſhall have died from the beginning of the world to that day, ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth to life. Then ſhall the ſoul and body, both which are neceſſary to conſtitute a man, be reunited, and enjoy a more perfect life than this ſtate admits of: Then will it appear that man, inſtead of ſuffering any loſs by death, is greatly improved and perfected by it; ſo that this enemy will be quite baffled and his malice defeated. It is indeed ſaid, in the text, Chriſt *hath* aboliſhed death; but this form of expreſſion is uſed rather to aſſure us that he will do this in due time, than to aſſert that he hath actually done it already. Chriſt has began, but has not yet finiſhed the deſtruction of death: For this, we are told, is the laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed. But Chriſt, who hath the keys of death and of hell, and who, by the appoint-

ment of God, muſt reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, will at length intirely overthrow this formidable tyrant, as well as all other tyrants, not leaving him one ſingle ſubject through all his gloomy realms. As to himſelf, Chriſt has indeed already aboliſhed death, by riſing triumphant from the grave, after he had been crucified and ſlain by wicked hands: whereby he has given a ſenſible proof that the divine power is able alſo to quicken our "mortal bodies," and reſtore them to life; and given us an earneſt and pledge of a general reſurrection, when the bodies of all men ſhall be as compleatly delivered from the bondage of corruption, as his own, and no trace be left of the injury which we received from the firſt Adam.

LET us now conſider in what ſenſe Chriſt hath aboliſhed eternal death. I need not tell you that the holy ſcriptures, our only ſafe inſtructor upon this point, neither aſſert nor intimate that He hath obtained for all men an actual exemption from this death; on the contrary, they plainly tell us, that many "ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment." The ſenſe therefore, in which our Saviour hath deſtroyed eternal death, is this; that He hath opened a way for ALL to eſcape it; and that all who put themſelves under his guidance and protection ſhall actually eſcape it.—He invites all without exception to do this, in the plaineſt and moſt affectionate terms.

And

And he will certainly preſerve all who accept the invitation from that ſtrange puniſhment which is reſerved for the workers of iniquity, and give unto them everlaſting life; not merely an endleſs exiſtence, but an endleſs happineſs in the preſence of God, where they ſhall never be in danger of being hurt by the ſecond death.

THE means by which the Son of God hath done theſe great things for mankind, were by dying and riſing again from the dead. The following paſſages of Scripture, among many others that might be mentioned, will make this ſufficiently evident. "For as much "as the children are partakers of fleſh and "blood, he alſo himſelf likewiſe took part of "the ſame, that through death he might de- "ſtroy him that had the power of death, "that is, the devil; and deliver them who "through fear of death, were all their life- "time ſubject to bondage." "Chriſt hath "redeemed us from the curſe of the law, "being made a curſe for us; that he might "reconcile us unto God by the croſs." He "hath redeemed us to God by his blood." "Chriſt our high prieſt——having offered "himſelf without ſpot unto God, obtained "eternal redemption for us." —"Thus it "behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from "the dead; that repentance and remiſſion of "ſins ſhould be preached in his name among "all nations." "He was delivered for our

 "offences,

" offences, and raiſed for our juſtification." " Bleſſed be the God, and Father of our Lord " Jeſus Chriſt, which according to his abun- " dant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a " lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus " Chriſt from the dead." Theſe declarations, without any comment, plainly teach us that it was by dying as a ſacrifice for ſin, and riſing again from the dead, that Jeſus Chriſt hath obtained for men redemption from deſtruction; or aboliſhed death in the ſenſe above-mentioned.

THE next thing propoſed was,

III. To illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition in the latter part of the text, viz. that life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel.

THIS expreſſion, " life and immortality," means immortal or eternal life; and this, as has been before obſerved, intends not merely an endleſs exiſtence, but a ſtate of everlaſting happineſs: So that the meaning of the aſſertion is, that Jeſus Chriſt by his goſpel has given us greater aſſurance, and a more clear diſcovery of a future and eternal ſtate of happineſs for the righteous, than the world had before.

ONE thing is here implied, and another aſſerted; to each of which, I ſhall ſpeak diſtinctly.

I. THE

1. THE thing implied is, that mankind was not fully acquainted with this doctrine, before the publication of the goſpel.

THIS was undoubtedly the caſe with the heathen world. For though in general they had ſome expectation of a future ſtate, yet their conceptions of it were uncertain and obſcure. Some of their wiſe men appear to have been in doubt whether they were to exiſt beyond the grave, though they thought the thing probable. Their moral writers did not generally enforce their precepts by a conſideration of future rewards and puniſhments. Thoſe who expected that good men would be happy after death, knew not when this happineſs would commence, in what it would conſiſt, or whether it would be unchangeable and eternal. They had no conception that the body which mouldered to duſt, would ever be raiſed to life again, and united to the ſoul. This was by ſome thought to be a thing which God himſelf could not effect; ſo eſſentially did they err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. The tranſmigration of the ſame ſoul into ſeveral bodies, one after another, was an opinion of many philoſophers: And this was inconſiſtent with the reſurrection; becauſe, upon this ſuppoſition, there muſt be more human bodies than ſouls. When the Stoics and Epicureans heard St. Paul ſpeak of the reſurrection, they made a jeſt of it, as an abſurd and incredible tale. And the Apoſtle more than intimates

that

that the heathens had little or no knowledge of a future ſtate of happineſs in what he ſays to the Epheſians, "Remember that ye being in "time paſſed Gentiles in the fleſh—HAVING "NO HOPE and without God in the world." In a word, if the heathens had ſome expectation of a ſtate of exiſtence after death, they had none at all of that "immortal life" which the goſpels reveals.

THE Jews were undoubtedly leſs defective in their knowledge upon this point, than other nations. There are ſeveral intimations of a future ſtate and of a reſurrection, in their holy ſcriptures.* Nor can there be any doubt, but that good men among them, in general, hoped and believed that they ſhould be happy after death. But ſtill theſe doctrines were not delivered in plain and expreſs terms. The law of Moſes was enforced only by temporal ſanction: And ſome chriſtian writers have doubted whether there be any where in the Old Teſtament any reference to a future ſtate at all; ſuppoſing that all the paſſages which have been thought to relate to it, are capable of a different interpretation. There are alſo ſome paſſages in the Old Teſtament, that at firſt view appear inconſiſtent with this doctrine. Thus Job ſays, "My days are "ſpent without hope—mine eye ſhall no more "ſee good.—As the cloud is conſumed, and "vaniſheth away; ſo he that goeth down to "the grave, ſhall come up no more." We find

* Job xix. 23—27. Dan. xii. 2. Hoſea xiii. 14.

find the Pſalmiſt ſpeaking in the ſame ſtrain, "Shall the dead ariſe and praiſe thee? Shall "thy loving kindneſs be known in the grave? "The dead praiſe not the Lord, neither any "that go down into ſilence." Man is "a "wind that paſſeth away and cometh not "again." Solomon alſo ſpeaks in the ſame deſperate language. "For the living know "that they ſhall die; but the dead know not "any thing, neither have they any more a re-"ward, for the memory of them is forgotten." Theſe paſſages ſeem rather to deſtroy than eſtabliſh the doctrine of a future ſtate: And though they are not ſufficient to ſet aſide the plain intimations which are given of it in other places; yet they probably had a tendency to weaken the belief of it. It is certain that this doctrine was by no means univerſally received among the Jews. The Sadduces, a learned and conſiderable ſect among them, expreſly denied it. And their principles, we are told, by the hiſtorian Joſephus, were generally adopted by the rich and great men of that nation. The Pythagorean doctrine of the tranſmigration of ſouls, ſeems likewiſe to have been believed by ſome of the Jews, at leaſt. The diſciples of our Lord were probably of this opinion, who aſked him reſpecting the man that was born blind, whether that calamity was inflicted for his own ſin, or for the ſin of his parents; for their queſtion plainly implies that they thought the man had been capable of ſinning before his birth; that is, moſt likely, in ſome former body.

UPON the whole, it appears from what has been briefly ſuggeſted, that the world ſtood in great need of ſome further inſtructions reſpecting a future ſtate, than either the light of nature, or the Jewiſh revelation gave. And that what was ſo much wanted, has by the unſpeakable goodneſs of God been granted, we ſhall ſee in conſidering the next particular; which is,

2. THAT Jeſus Chriſt hath brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel; that is, hath made a clear and full diſcovery of a future ſtate of happineſs; and taught us every thing reſpecting it, which it concerns us to know.

FOR the confirmation of this aſſertion, let me obſerve; that the goſpel plainly teaches us, that, though our bodies are ſhort-lived periſhing beings, yet the human ſoul, the rational principle within us, and our better part, is immortal, and exiſts in a ſeperate ſtate; and that when the good man dies, his ſoul goes immediately into a ſtate of happineſs to be preſent with the Lord. Thus we find our bleſſed Saviour telling his diſciples that "thoſe who kill the body cannot kill "the ſoul." And declaring to the penitent thief on the croſs; "to day ſhalt thou be "with me in paradiſe." Thus we find St. Stephen, when he was ſtoned to death, committing his departing ſoul into the hands of his Saviour, ſaying, "Lord Jeſus, receive my "ſpirit."

"ſpirit." The Apoſtle Paul alſo ſpeaks of being "preſent with the Lord," as the certain and immediate conſequence of dying, or being abſent from the body. And the Apoſtle Peter ſpeaks of death, as the putting off or laying aſide the body. From theſe paſſages it appears to be plainly the doctrine of the goſpel, that the happineſs of the righteous commenceth immediately upon their death; that the ſoul, inſtead of falling into a ſtate of forgetfulneſs and inſenſibility, when the body dies, is carried directly to heaven, to join the church of the firſt-born, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. This is a glorious diſcovery of the goſpel which the world had no certain knowledge of before its publication. The heathens might wiſh and hope for ſuch a thing, and ſo might the Jews upon better grounds: But neither of them had any expreſs promiſe of it, or certain information about it. The region beyond the grave was all dark, before it was illuminated by the ſun of righteouſneſs. The goſpel further aſſures us that the human body, which now dies and mingles with the earth, ſhall in due time be raiſed to life again. "For "the hour is coming," ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, "in which all that are in their graves "ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God and "come forth." "And this is the will of "him that ſent me, that every one which "ſeeth the Son, and believeth on him, may "have everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him "up at the laſt day." The ſame thing

is alſo aſſerted in many other paſſages, in the plaineſt terms; ſo that we cannot doubt the truth of this doctrine, if we believe the goſpel; "if we believe that Jeſus died and roſe again," we muſt alſo believe that "them which ſleep "in Jeſus, God will bring with him." Nor do the ſcriptures ſpeak merely of the reſurrection of *the dead*, but of the reſurrection of the *body* in ſuch terms as plainly to intimate that the ſame body which was laid in the grave ſhall be raiſed to life again. Thus it is ſaid, "He that raiſed up Jeſus from the "dead ſhall quicken our mortal bodies," the bodies which now die ſhall be quickned, or made alive again. Again it is ſaid, "This "corruptible muſt put on incorruption, and "this mortal muſt put on immortality:" that is, this ſame body which is now mortal and corruptible, ſhall be rendered immortal and incorruptible. We are not indeed to ſuppoſe that every particular body will conſiſt of all the ſame particles of matter, when it ſhall be raiſed, that belonged to it when it died. This may not be poſſible: But that the raiſed body ſhall ſo far conſiſt of the ſame matter, that the dying one did, as that it may properly be called the ſame body, I think, is plainly intimated in ſcripture. We have indeed an example of this in the reſurrection of Chriſt; nor can we conceive why it ſhould not be as eaſy for the divine power to raiſe the ſame body, as to create one out of different matter. But though the ſame body

which

which dies ſhall be raiſed again, yet, the goſpel acquaints us, that it ſhall be greatly altered: "For the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall "change our vile body, that it may be "faſhioned like unto his glorious body, ac- "cording to the working whereby he is able "even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf." In what reſpects the body that ſhall be raiſed will differ from the preſent body the Apoſtle tells us, "It is ſown in corruption, it is raiſed "in incorruption; it is ſown in diſhonour, it "is raiſed in glory; it is ſown in weakneſs, "it is raiſed in power; it is ſown a natural "body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body." To the body thus freed from all the ſeeds of corruption, from all its preſent imperfections, weakneſſes and wants, ſhall the ſoul be again united; and then ſhall the ſaints enter upon the poſſeſſion of that inheritance incorrupti- ble, undefiled, and unfading, which is now reſerved in heaven for them. And "then ſhall "be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, "death is ſwallowed up in victory." The ſouls of the righteous will indeed be happy while their bodies lie in the grave; but their happineſs will not be compleat, till after the reſurrection. Then ſhall they, being publickly and ſolemnly acquitted by the Saviour and Judge of the world, and owned as his friends and diſciples, go away into life eternal, and be as happy as they can deſire, in the abſence of all evil, and the poſſeſſion of all good: "For "they ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt

"any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on "them nor any heat: for the Lamb which is "in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, "and ſhall lead them unto living fountains "of waters: And God ſhall wipe away all "tears from their eyes." Theſe are figurative expreſſions to denote the perfection of the ſaints bleſſedneſs. And there are many other deſcriptions, which muſt give us a moſt exalted idea of this happineſs; as when we are told that it will conſiſt in knowing, loving and being like God; in being ſeated on a throne with the glorious redeemer, and enjoying the ſociety of holy angels. What is the happineſs which the heathens expected in their elyſium compared with this?——But further we are aſſured that this happineſs ſhall be unchangeable and eternal. It is called in ſcripture "eternal glory," "eternal ſalvation," an "eternal inheritance," and "eternal life." This adds great weight to the happineſs of heaven, that it will not be liable to change or period. How different is it, in this reſpect, from every thing which is called happineſs here below! How uncertain, how fleeting are all earthly enjoyments! We call them ours to-day, and to-morrow they are gone from us to return no more. Should not the greatneſs and the eternity of this happineſs captivate our hearts and engage us with the greateſt zeal and diligence to ſeek it? It was for this purpoſe, that the divine goodneſs has given us ſuch an engaging deſcription of the

glories

glories of heaven. And that we might not be at a loss how to know how we might lay hold on eternal life, the gospel has plainly told us what we must do to be saved, viz. repent of all our sins, believe on the Lord Jesus and keep his commandments; at the same time offering us the assistances of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to do thus. I will only observe further, that as the gospel makes a full discovery of a future state, and of every thing respecting it, which it concerns us to know, so we have the most satisfactory evidence that what it teaches upon these points is true. The heathens had so many absurd and improbable fables blended with their doctrine of a future state, as greatly prejudiced the belief of it. The stories which were told about the river Styx, Charon's boat, &c. could not be believed by any considerate men: Nor can it be doubted but that the absurdity of these tales made some give up the whole doctrine with which they were connected. But the doctrine of the gospel upon this point, is worthy to be believed, as being in itself, in every part of it, a rational and consistent doctrine; as well as on account of the character of its author: Who by the many mighty works which he did during his ministry, proved himself to be the great messenger and prophet of God; and was emphatically declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead.

Thus life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The doctrine is more

clearly

clearly known, and better confirmed than it was before this diſpenſation. The veil, which before, hid the regions beyond the grave from the world, is drawn aſide; and a ſcene of light and joy unſpeakable preſents itſelf to our view, into which Jeſus the fore-runner is for us entered. Whither he is gone we know, and the way we know: And this we alſo know, that if we do his commandments we ſhall at length go to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, and partake of the joys of eternity.

LET me now offer ſome reflections by way of application.

1. WE ſee from this ſubject what great obligations mankind is under to Jeſus Chriſt, our Saviour and Redeemer. To him we are immediately indebted for our hopes of deliverance from death and deſtruction, and for all our proſpects of happineſs beyond the grave. He hath not only diſcovered a ſtate of future glory, but it is he that hath opened a way to it. The ſacred Scriptures evidently teach us that none of the ſinful children of Adam can obtain eternal life, in any other way than through his mediation and ſuffering; that death would forever have held all the fallen race under his dominion, if Chriſt had not interpoſed to reſcue them. To Him, therefore, let us, with the warmeſt gratitude, aſcribe everlaſting glory and honor, praiſe and thankſgiving. But,

2. LET

2. LET us alſo remember our obligations to the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to whoſe free unſupplicated goodneſs we are ultimately indebted for all the bleſſings of the goſpel. It was He who formed the glorious plan of ſalvation by Chriſt, before the world began; and when the fulneſs of time was come, ſent forth his Son to redeem us from the curſe of the law: And His Providence was nearly concerned in, and directed all thoſe events by which death is aboliſhed, and life and immortality are brought to light. All is to be ultimately reſolved into the unmerited love and benignity of Almighty God. Wherefore, "bleſſed be the God and Father "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which according "to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us "again unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection "of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead, to an inhe-"ritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and "that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven "for thoſe, who are kept by the power of "God through faith unto ſalvation, ready to "be revealed in the laſt time."

3. THE conſideration of this ſubject ſhould reconcile good men to the thoughts of death, and make them willing to leave the world whenever God calls them. As to ſuch, Chriſt hath made death to be only exchanging this for a better ſtate; a paſſage out of this troubleſome world unto life eternal. And who that reflected upon the ſufferings to which

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we are liable here, and the happineſs of the future ſtate, but what would be willing to make the exchange? What has this life to engage our love compared with the happineſs of heaven? Let the good man's worldly circumſtances be ever ſo agreeable, let his proſpects be ever ſo promiſing, he has no reaſon to be unwilling to give them all up, for the ſake of going to be ever with the Lord. Whether he hath lived a longer or a ſhorter time in the world it matters not. If he hath lived by faith in the Son of God, and kept his commandments, death cannot come too ſoon for him. And though he comes in the guiſe of an enemy, and makes a formidable appearance, he is in truth a conquered enemy, has loſt his ſting and can really do us no hurt, if we are the ſervants of Chriſt. Let us then ſincerely endeavor to obey the goſpel, and we ſhall have no reaſon to fear the approach of death, and may even with joy hope for it.

4. This ſubject affords us abundant matter of conſolation under the troubles and afflictions which we meet with in the world. If we bear them with patience, and acquit ourſelves well, it will be but a little while, before they will be followed with everlaſting joy and gladneſs. And indeed the ſubject we have been upon is of vaſt importance in this view: For when we are oppreſſed with the miſeries and calamities of life, and experience the uncertainty and unſatisfying nature

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of all worldly enjoyments, it muſt be an unſpeakable ſatisfaction, to be aſſured that there is a more durable and happy ſtate beyond the grave, which lies open to us. Were it not for this proſpect, it ſeems as if human nature muſt be ſometimes quite overborne by ſorrow and diſtreſs. And thoſe perſons are ſurely much to be pitied as well as blamed, who, either through their infidelity, or their diſobedience to the goſpel, can derive no conſolation from it, in the day of adverſity.

But this ſubject is, in a peculiar manner, adapted to ſupport and comfort us, when death takes away our pious friends and relatives. We may ſay of them as our bleſſed Saviour ſaid of the Jewiſh ruler's daughter, though not in exactly the ſame ſenſe, they are not dead, but ſleep; that is, they are not dead in the ſenſe which paſſion, or unenlightened nature, is ready to pronounce them ſo: They are not loſt, or ſeperated from us forever, but only for a time. Their ſouls, whoſe virtues and endowments were the principal cauſe of our attachment to them, and which we moſt highly valued, are not dead, or in the leaſt injured by the diſſoluſion of the body; they have only quitted this ſtate, and are gone to the paradiſe above, where they will be forever free from all defilement and imperfection, and beyond the reach of all thoſe pains and ſorrows which break the reſt and wound the boſoms of mortal men. And though their bodies are at preſent under the dominion of death, and

ſhut up in the grave, the houſe appointed for all the living, they are priſoners of hope: For the ſame power which raiſed the young woman, above referred to, from the dead, ſhall, in due time, raiſe them alſo, with freſh and unfading beauty, ſtrength and vigor. To theſe glorious bodies, infinitely more beautiful and charming, than the moſt lovely and engaging mortal, their ſouls ſhall be again united, and enter upon the enjoyment of endleſs and unmixed felicity. And though they will no more return to us, we muſt in a little while go to them;—our bodies to theirs in the grave, and our ſouls to theirs in the world of ſpirits: And if, like them, we die in the Lord, we ſhall again enjoy their ſociety in heaven, upon much better terms than we did here.

THESE conſiderations muſt have a powerful tendency to comfort and ſupport us, under ſuch events. We cannot in reaſon mourn for the dead, though we may for our own loſs. And indeed ſurvivors have often great reaſon to do this. The death of a beloved, prudent and faithful friend, is the greateſt of all temporal calamities. It ſometimes makes ſuch a breach in the family where it happens, as nothing in this world can fully repair, and leaves an incurable wound in the bereaved breaſt. Nor, upon ſuch occaſions, is it inconſiſtent with religion to mourn our loſs with moderation, and a becoming ſubmiſſion to

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the divine will. Has not then the huſband reaſon to mourn, when death takes from him his dear wife, to whom he was united, not by the ties of intereſt, but by the gentle, yet powerful bands of unadulterated love; in whom he has ever found a prudent, faithful and moſt affectionate friend; who never knew a ſorrow that he had without ſorrowing herſelf, or a joy that he felt without rejoicing with him; who with unremitted and almoſt unexampled tenderneſs watched over her children to preſerve them from evil, endeavouring both by inſtruction and example to train them up in the ways of honor and uſefulneſs, of religion and virtue; who made it her continual and delightful employment to render him and all her family happy; in whom, to allude to Solomon's deſcription of ſuch a woman, 'the heart of her huſband did 'ſafely truſt, without fear of ſpoil; who 'looked well to the ways of her houſe-'hold, and ate not the bread of idleneſs; 'who did him good and not evil all the 'days of her life; in whoſe tongue was 'the law of kindneſs, who ſtretched out 'her hands to the poor and needy, ſo that 'the bleſſing of many ready to periſh came 'upon her;' and who was his 'companion in the kingdom and patience of Jeſus Chriſt,' and through faith in him, led a life of ſincere, though not oſtentatious, piety and devotion, looking for the mercy of God to eternal life? —Has not, I ſay, he that has loſt ſuch a friend

and companion great reaſon to mourn his loſs? He that can be unaffected with ſuch a bereavement muſt be ſomething more or leſs than a man. Reſignation to the will of Heaven is indeed his indiſpenſable duty, though the deſire of his eyes and the delight of his heart is taken from him. But chriſtian reſignation does not deſtroy the feelings of humanity; nor does religion require that it ſhould. Our bleſſed Saviour did not chide the ſiſters of Lazarus for weeping at the death of their brother; yea he wept with them. Surely then, he will not be offended with a ſervant for weeping over the grave of a friend nearer than a brother. Nor has the daughter much leſs reaſon to mourn her loſs, who, when ſhe is juſt coming into life, and moſt needs the hand of maternal wiſdom and experience to conduct her into the paths of religion and honor, is deprived of a mother from whoſe affection ſhe has experienced and might have expected every kindneſs ſhe could reaſonably deſire, and from whoſe inſtruction and example ſhe might have learnt the practice of piety and virtue, of every thing decent and praiſeworthy, lovely and of good report: Yea, the brother of ſuch a ſiſter, and all her relatives, have great cauſe to lament their loſs when ſhe is taken from them: Though they ſhould not mourn as thoſe who have no hope, nor murmur againſt Providence.

SUCH reflections as we have been attending to will not, I hope, be thought unworthy

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the conſideration of this aſſembly in general: But I muſt acknowledge that in offering them I have had a particular regard to my own caſe. I have often endeavoured to adminiſter the conſolations of religion to other people under their afflictions: And they who undertake to teach others, ought to know how to teach themſelves. God has lately given me great occaſion for theſe conſolations to ſupport my ſpirits. It has pleaſed him in his moſt wiſe and holy providence grievouſly to afflict me and my family, by the ſudden death of my beloved companion and faithful friend. Though I have not lived to this age, without often drinking of the cup of affliction, yet I muſt acknowledge this to be the moſt bitter draught which I have taſted. But "the cup "which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not "drink it?" I bleſs God, that I am not without conſolation. I have reaſon to hope that my loſs is her gain; that ſhe is gone to the manſions of heaven, where ſhe is far happier than the happieſt mortal; where there is nothing to diſturb her repoſe, to interrupt her felicity; where her imperfections are all done away, and her virtues perfected; where the diſtreſſes of the poor and miſerable which ſhe has ſo often mourned, will never more wound her breaſt; and where that charity, in which ſhe ſo much delighted, reigns uncontrouled, and gives law to all the bleſt inhabitants. Could the departed ſpirit now addreſs me, it would doubtleſs be in language to this purpoſe:

"Weep

"Weep not for me, who am got beyond "the reach of all imperfection and ſorrow; "but rather weep for yourſelf, and for your "children who are longer to ſtruggle with "the weakneſs, the temptations and the cala-"mities of mortality. Yea, inſtead of weep-"ing, if you loved me, you ſhould rather re-"joice, at the happy exchange which I have "made." If we love our friends we ſhall not be unwilling to ſuffer for their good. I ought not ſurely to repine at ſuffering much for her happineſs, who never thought ſhe could do too much to promote mine. When I conſider theſe things, I cannot but be ſenſible that even friendſhip for the deceaſed, though it gives pungency to my ſorrow, ought in reaſon to reconcile me to her departure.

But I ought further to conſider that as this event has not taken place, without the hand and counſel of God, who woundeth and who healeth, who killeth and who maketh alive; ſo He has a right to do what He pleaſes with me and mine, and always does what is beſt; and therefore abſolute ſubmiſſion to his will is both my duty and intereſt:—That death is the common lot of all the children of Adam; and friends ought always to remember that a parting time will come. So that this ſeperation is what muſt have taken place at ſome time or other. And that divine Providence, under whoſe guidance and direction ſuch connections are formed, knows when and in what manner it is beſt to diſſolve them.

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We are "fallen on evil days with dangers "compaſs'd round." And poſſibly ſuch calamities may ſoon befall us as ſhall make many who are now alive wiſh to hide themſelves in the grave. Our bleſſed Saviour ſpeaking in reference to the deſolation that was coming upon Jeruſalem, ſays, "wo unto them that "are with child, and to them that give ſuck "in thoſe days." And it will not be owing either to our own righteouſneſs, or to the good diſpoſition of our enemies, if the caſe ſhould not be the ſame among us. There can be no doubt but God ſometimes removes his faithful ſervants out of this world, with a view to prevent their ſeeing and bearing a part in the calamities which he is about to bring upon a ſinful people. Accordingly we read, that "the righteous is taken away from the "evil to come." And there is an expreſs promiſe to king Joſiah to this purpoſe. "Thus "ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael;—becauſe thine "heart was tender, &c. behold therefore I "will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou "ſhalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, "and thine eye ſhall not ſee all the evil which "I will bring upon this place." It is not poſſible for me, or any one elſe to ſay that it is not for a ſimilar reaſon that God has taken away my beloved friend. And this conſideration affords an additional argument for acquieſcence in this event of providence. When I reflect upon my little children, eſpecially upon the new-born infant, lent me, as it were, in

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exchange for his mother, thus early deprived of a parent who had too juſt a ſenſe of her duty, and too much natural affection to neglect the nurſing and care of her offspring, and abandon them to unfeeling ſtrangers, my heart is pained within me, for thoſe tender branches of ſo beloved a vine. But here alſo religion affords me abundant conſolation. God who gave them and has hitherto preſerved them, ſome of them through dangers and ſickneſs, can take care of, and preſerve them ſtill. If not a ſparrow falls to the ground without Him; if the very hairs of our head are all numbered by Him; ſurely the care of little children, who are of more value than many ſparrows, cannot be beneath his notice. He can eaſily order matters ſo, that they ſhall want none of that care and thoſe kind offices which their helpleſs ſtate requires. Our bleſſed Saviour, who was himſelf born of a woman, ſhewed particular kindneſs to little children in the days of his miniſtry on earth: Nor do I doubt but He ſtill bears the ſame affection to ſuch, delighting to be-friend them and do them good. Wherefore committing them into the hands of God who made them, and of his Son who redeemed them, and doing the duty of a father myſelf, I need not be anxious either about their temporal or eternal welfare.

SUCH reflections as theſe give me much conſolation in the midſt of my mourning, though by reaſon of thoſe ſocial affections, which

which are by no means to be condemned, I am not able to get wholly above all grief upon this occaſion.—— Give me leave to add that I have no doubt but God has wiſe and kind purpoſes to anſwer with reſpect to myſelf and my family, by means of this diſpenſation of his providence:—That it is deſigned to make us wiſer and better, leſs fond of this vain world, and more earneſt and diligent in ſeeking that eternal life which the goſpel reveals:—That it is deſigned to make me more intirely devoted to him and his ſervice in the ſtation to which he has called me; and therefore more likely to be ſerviceable to you, in the work of the miniſtry; particularly better qualified to ſympathiſe with, and to comfort them that are in ſorrow; which I ſhould eſteem as one valuable effect of my affliction. Indeed one principal reaſon of my thus freely laying open to you, the fources of my own conſolation on this occaſion, is that you may be comforted under ſimilar trials, if they have already befallen you, or ſhould befall you, with the ſame "comfort wherewith I am myſelf comforted of God." And this, I hope, will at leaſt be ſome apology, for ſpeaking ſo much concerning myſelf and my own private trouble, and in ſome degree digreſſing from my ſubject. Though, indeed, I do not apprehend that this viſitation ought to be conſidered as only a private affliction. The death of a perſon, in the midſt of her days, whoſe example was at once ſo engaging, and ſo

worthy of imitation, is a loſs not only to her family, but to all her friends and acquaintance. Nor do I doubt but my beloved hearers in general, and eſpecially thoſe who have more "fully known her manner of life, faith, charity and patience," are afflicted by her death, and mourn both their own loſs and mine. I have known too much of your eſteem and friendſhip for her, and have experienced too many inſtances of your kindneſs to me, to leave any room to doubt this. And while I, with gratitude, and a kind of ſad pleaſure, reflect upon your generous ſympathy with me, I pray God that you may not be without the conſolations of religion to ſupport you under this and every other trial, that providence may bring upon you; and that you may have wiſdom and grace to improve them for his glory and your own good;—to be followers of your deceaſed friends, ſo far as they followed Chriſt.

5. And to conclude; ſince Jeſus Chriſt hath by the goſpel brought to light a ſtate of future and eternal happineſs for the righteous, let us make it our great concern to obtain a title to it; by a patient continuance in well-doing ſeeking for glory, honor and immortality. Temporal death we cannot eſcape, nor if we are wiſe ſhall we deſire it: Our bodies muſt ſhortly go to the grave and ſee corruption; but our immortal ſouls ſhall either be convoyed by angels to the realms

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of bliſs, or thruſt down into that place of torment, where there is no joy, no conſolation, no hope. God calls upon us both by his word and by his providence to prepare for eternity; and if we will not regard the call, in vain, as to us, hath Chriſt aboliſhed death, and brought eternal life to light, ſince in the error of our ways we ſeek the former, and will not lay hold on the latter. Let us, then, in this their day mind the things of our peace before they are hidden from our eyes; and in a particular manner attend to the admonitions of providence in the departure of our friends and acquaintance, imagining that we hear, as it were, a voice ſounding from the chamber of death, and from the tomb ſaying, "be ye alſo ready, improve the fleeting mo-"ments; for there is no work, nor device, "nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, "whither ye are haſtening." Did we properly regard ſuch admonitions, and now live as dying, immortal creatures ought to live, we ſhould be prepared to meet death with calmneſs and compoſure of mind, however ſuddenly or unexpectedly it might come upon us: And when we quit theſe bodies to be depoſited in the duſt for a time, our never-dying ſpirits would fly ſwiftly to the regions of light, and joy unſpeakable and full of glory. There, without doubt, we ſhall find many of our old friends and acquaintance who are gone before us. And perhaps the felicity of that place will in part ariſe from

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their ſociety and converſe.* There we ſhall be introduced into "the general aſſembly "and church of the firſt-born which are "written in heaven, to God the Judge of all, "to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and "to Jeſus the mediator of the new covenant." O what joy and gladneſs of heart will ſpring from hence! Imagination can at preſent form no adequate idea of it. O when ſhall we enter upon this thrice bleſſed ſtate? When ſhall we go to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, to ſpend an eternity in the ſublime exerciſes of knowledge, purity and love?

* See 1 Theſ. ii. 19, 20.

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